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LETTERS, &c.

WHICH PASSED BETWIXT

J. WING, Agent to the Duke of Bedford

AND

GEO. MAXWELL,

ON THE

NORTH LEVEL BUSINESS.

In 1788.

PETERBOROUGH;

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BRITISH MUSEUM

LETTERS, &c.

ON THE
NORTH LEVEL BUSINESS.

MR. MAXWELL, having thought proper to trouble the Public with a Part of our Correſpondence on the North Level Buſineſs, and alluded to the Remainder, I beg Leave to ſubmit that Part alſo, to them; which indeed ſeems neceſſary, in order that the Subject may be explained to the Proprietors from the beginning; truſting it will appear to every one, that I was not bigotted to any particular Plan, that in conſidering the Buſineſs, I wiſhed for Mr. Maxwell's Opinion, and that in communicating to him my Sentiments, as alſo in the Manner of ſo doing, I did not forget the Reſpect due to his Situation.

bigoted

To Mr. Maxwell, Fletton Lodge.

Dear Sir,

Thorney Abby, April 25th, 1788.

"LEST I ſhould not have the Pleaſure of meeting you at "Peterboro' to Morrow, and as we may not perhaps meet ſoon, "if we do not then, both of us ſeeming at preſent to be pretty "much engaged, I have taken the Liberty of troubling you with "the incloſed Plan, being what I before mentioned to you, for "raiſing Money, for Payment of the Debt of 25,000l. owing on "the North Level Corporation Revenues, and for providing a "further Sum, for the Support of their Works, and at the ſame "Time will beg Leave to offer a few Remarks thereon.

"The (printed) State of the Revenue, Debt and Works of "the Corporation of Bedford Level for the North Level, which "I don't recollect before to have given you, and have herewith "incloſed, will I apprehend ſufficiently ſhew them; with the "Opinion of the Country at a Meeting held at Peterboro', Nov. "2d, 1778, reſpecting the Inſufficiency of the then Revenues, "for the Support of thoſe Works, and to which we ſhall be "again reduced, at Chriſtmas next, viz. to 346l. 11s. 10d. per Ann. "for Support of the North Bank, Carr Dyke, and Folly Banks, "and which is the Cauſe of my giving you this Trouble — Fully "ſenſible of the Inſufficiency thereof for thoſe Purpoſes on which "ſo much depends, indeed the very Exiſtence of this Country, "and the dreadful Conſequences attendant on the Failure of them, "I ſubmit to your Conſideration, requeſting your Sentiments "thereon, the incloſed Plan for raiſing Money for their further Sup- "port, and Payment of the Debt of 25,000l. and will only beg "to add, ſhould that or ſomething ſimilar thereto, be approved of "by his Grace, and Sir Sampſon Gideon, the Country will I "believe not only be ready, but are deſirous of joining in it — "And the Taxes then will be 4d, per Acre leſs than at preſent — "And if approved, and no unforeſeen Accident, prevents its Comple- "tion, the perpetual Revenues of 1714l. 11s. 10d. will be ſuch as "in all Probability entirely to ſecure the Country from future "Drownings by Breach of Bank, and aſſiſt, not only the Commiſſi-

"oners

" oners, if at any Period, the Works at the Sea ſhouſd require it,
" but alſo the Welland Bank Fund, which I think will require
" it—and the preſent perpetual Taxes of 6d. per Acre, per Act
" 27 GEO. II. amounting to 990l. 11s. 2d. per Annum, for
" the Commiſſioners Works, and the 6d. per Acre per Act 11
" GEO. III. and the Corporation Tax, amounting together to the
" above 1714l. 11s 10d. for the Corporation Works will be
" the only remaining Taxes, and all that will be wanting for
" the Public Works of the Level, and on which no Debt will
" then be owing, neither will there on any of the Diſtrict Taxes
" of the Level; happy for them would it be could the other
" Levels ſay the ſame!

" I have treſpaſſed a great deal, but I truſt you will excuſe
" me; at a convenient Opportunity I ſhall be happy to be fa-
" voured with your Sentiments and truly ſo, if they ſhall coin-
" cide with my own, in reſpect to the Outlines of the Plan, &c.
" &c.

I am

Dear Sir,

Your moſt obedient Servant,

J. WING.

Anſwer.

Fletton Lodge, April 28th, 1788.

Dear Sir,

" SIR Sampſon Gideon has reaped ſo little Advantage from
" his Eſtates in the North Level, that a Reduction of Taxes
" has been looked forward to, as a very deſirable Circumſtance,
" and I am aware that he will not conſent to any new Tax
" unleſs the abſolute Neceſſity of the Meaſure can be ſhewn;

" I presume it cannot with Propriety be said that we shall at " Christmas next, be reduced to the same insufficient Fund as " existed, at the Time of the Resolutions being made for an En- " crease of Taxes, unless it likewise appears, that the North Bank " and other Banks are in the same weak and precarious State " as they were in at that Time, and as no one can be a better " Judge of this than yourself, I should like to be favoured with " your Opinion of their comparative State (particularly of the " North Bank) at the two Periods I am speaking of, as I wish " to lay every Thing before Mr Wilmot in as clear and concise " a Manner as possible. I beg the Favour of your Answer " likewise to the following Enquiries —

" Viz. How it happened that the Mode of taxing in equal " Proportions the Lands in the North Level and in Portsand as " adopted by the 27th Geo. II. came to be varied, as it was " by the 11th Geo. III. and upon what Ground the original " Mode was not again resorted to, at the Meeting held at Peter- " borough, on the 2d of November 1778 ?

" What Plan was exhibited at that Meeting, for Payment of " of the Debt contracted on the North Level, under the Act " of the 27th of Geo. II ?

" Whether any and what Part of that Debt has been since " paid off ? What Plan was exhibited and what Resolutions " had at the ajourned Meeting on the 30th of November, 1778, " at which Time I presume the Agreement was made for laying " on the further Tax of 4d. per Acre on the North Level, and " 2d. per Acre on Portsand ?

" How much Money has been expended on the North Bank " in each Year, since those Taxes were laid, and how much on " the Folly and the Carr Dyke Banks ?

" What is the present State of the Arrears of the 6d. per " Acre, laid on the North Level and Portland, by the 27th " Geo. II.—of the 6d. on the North Level, and 3d. on Port- " sand by 11th Geo. III.—and of the subsequent Taxes of 1s. " per Acre, on the North Level, and 6d. on Portsand for Ge-

" neral

" neral Works — and 4d. on the North Level, and 2d. on Port-
" ſand for Repairs of the Banks? With the Names of the Perſons
" in Arrear, and the Amount of the reſpective Sums? — And laſtly
" upon Payment of thoſe Arrears, what will be the Amount of
" the unappropriated Fund at Chriſtmas next, when the two laſt
" mentioned Taxes expire?

I remain

Dear Sir,

Your obliged

and obedient Servant,

GEO. MAXWELL.

To Mr. Maxwell.

Thorney Abby, May 2d, 1788.

Dear Sir,

" IT was at the preſſing Intreaty of ſeveral conſiderable Pro-
" prietors in the North Level, that I turned my Thoughts
" to the Plan for raiſing Money to pay off the Debt, &c. owing
" on the Corporation Revenues, but am by no Means authorized
" to offer it, as intended to be carried into Execution; with His
" Grace's and Mr. Macnamara's Sentiments thereon, I am a total
" Stranger, it is poſſible they may be as averſe to it, as you
" ſuppoſe Sir Sampſon Gideon will be, for the Produce of His
" Grace's and all other North Level Eſtates hath been too,
" comparatively ſmall, ſhould that be the Caſe, it will be unneceſ-
" ſary for you or me to trouble ourſelves further about it. The
" Idea I can with the greateſt Truth aſſure you, did not originate
" in me; as an Individual, and a Proprietor, I did, and do co-
" incide in Sentiment with thoſe who firſt wiſhed to diſcharge

the

" the Debt now that we are able, conceiving it an Act of Juſtice,
" due to the Creditors, Ourſelves, and Poſterity,—but as the Agent
" for the Duke of Bedford, I beg to be conſidered at preſent, as
" unable to ſay any Thing on the Subject, I troubled you, that
" you might be made acquainted therewith, and have Time to
" conſider it, ſhould it be brought forward; if it is not, I have
" given you an unneceſſary Trouble, which as it was well intend-
" ed, I truſt you will excuſe, but ſhould it, and the Neceſſity of
" the Meaſure be doubted, I am very well aware of my Inability
" to remove thoſe Doubts, that, muſt be the Attempt of ſome far
" abler Perſon —

" With reſpect to your Enquiries — the weak and precarious
" State of the North Bank, in 1778, (eight Years after the Breach)
" and after 20,000l. had been expended thereon, beſides the an-
" nual Revenue, I preſume ſufficiently ſhews, how expenſive it is
" to keep in Repair —— You aſk my Opinion of its preſent
" State — I think it very far from being in complete Repair —

" Portſand is not a Part of the North Level, nor dependant
" on the outward Banks thereof, their Payments are chiefly for
" the Liberty of Draining by the North Level Outfal, and for
" which they have hitherto been eſteemed ſufficient —

" A Plan ſimilar to that I have troubled you with, was exhi-
" bited at the Meeting at Peterborough —

" The North Level Commiſſioners Debt was 14,000l. 10,000l.
" of which is paid, 2,000l. more will be paid by Midſummer next,
" and the remaining 2,000l. in due time —

" With reſpect to the Expenditure of the Money, I muſt beg
" Leave to refer you to the ſeveral Accounts, which are at all
" Times ready for your's, and any Commiſſioners Inſpection —

" It will not be until Midſummer next, that the Amount of
" the unappropriated Funds can be aſcertained, and which I appre-
" hend will be very little more than the Perpetual Taxes, the
" Arrears of which I preſume will be found of little Amount;
" and of the Temporary Taxes I hope, and believe there will

be

" be *no Arrears* as ſoon after the Expiration of the Term for " which they were laid as may *reaſonably* be expected.

I am

Dear Sir,

Your moſt obedient Servant.

J. W I N G.

Fletton Lodge, May 4th, 1788.

Dear Sir,

" I Received the favour of your Letter Yeſterday and am " much obliged to you for the Trouble you have taken, " as well in making me acquainted with there being a Plan in " Agitation for diſcharging the Debts on the North Level Re- " venue, as in anſwering my Enquiries, reſpecting the general State " of the Buſineſs.

" Whoever was the original Propoſer of the Scheme it reflects " Credit upon him,* for it certainly is the Duty of the Land " Owners, to put the Creditors upon a footing of Security, if " poſſible, but I will be ſo candid as to ſay, it has always appear- " ed to me, that the Taxes are improperly laid, for the four " Diſtricts not being equally dependant on the Strength and Se- " curity of the North Bank, I preſume no good Reaſon can be " given, why they ſhould be equally charged towards the Re- " pairs of it, tho' with reſpect to the Outfal, they are alike " intereſted, and ought therefore to contribute in equal Propor- " tions towards the General Works. This ſeems to have been " the Senſe of the Country, or at leaſt of the Owner of Port- " ſand, at the Time when the Act of the 11th, GEO. III. was framed

* Vide Mr. Maxwell's laſt Publication Page 14, line 36, — "The Plan I have all along reprobated was ſent me by Mr. Leg."

" framed, notwithſtanding the Preamble to that Act recites, that " by the Breaches, of the North Bank, the Lands in Portſand " were at that Time overflowed. Give me leave to notice a few " general Facts as they occur from your Anſwers to my firſt and " ſecond Enquiries, and you will excuſe my remarking that you " ſeem to have entirely miſunderſtood my firſt Enquiry, for I " did not aſk your Opinion of the preſent State of the North " Bank, but of the comparative State of it at two diſtinct Peri- " ods. If I can depend upon my own Judgment, founded upon " Obſervation at the two Periods alluded to, the preſent State of " it is very greatly ſuperior to what it was in 1778, and if the " prodigious Improvement in the Outfal, is taken into the Ac- " count (and certainly the lowering the Head of Waters on the " outſide of a Bank is the moſt effectual Means of ſtrengthening " it, as well as of preventing Soak) the Fund that will be left " at Chriſtmas next, tho' exactly the ſame as in 1778, will go " infinitely further than it could have done at that Time,

" The whole of the North Level is equally pledged for 25,000l. " Portſand is likewiſe *equally* pledged with the North Level for " 5,000l, Part thereof borrowed by Virtue of the 29th of GEO. II. " (by the bye you have altered the 9 to 7 in the printed Caſe, " which miſled me, and was the Occaſion of my fourth Enquiry) " becauſe the Money was lent on the Credit of the Taxes laid " 27th of GEO. II. —— The Payment of the Debt of 14,000l. " borrowed by the Commiſſioners by Virtue of 27th of GEO. II. " (to which I preſume the Plan exhibited at the Meeting on the " 2d. of November 1778, was confined, and not extended to the " 5,000l. borrowed by the Corporation by Virtue of the 29th, " of GEO. II.) will ſtamp a Degree of Credit upon the Parties con- " cerned, that cannot fail to be favourable to any new Scheme that " may become neceſſary or *expedient*, and more eſpecially if Pay- " ment is enforced of the Arrears of Taxes, which you intimate " will be the Caſe, but I cannot ſay ſo much reſpecting the " Plan exhibited at the adjourned Meeting on the 30th of " Nov. 1778, becauſe you have not ſaid a Syllable in Anſwer to " that Enquiry, neither have I ever ſeen the Act of Parlia- " ment that was obtained in conſequence of that Meeting.

" The Sentiments I have formed, are founded in Juſtice and Equity,

" Equity, and it will be no difficult Matter to qualify the Plan " you now propoſe ſo as to ſuit them. The Tax ſhould be 1s. per " Acre on the North Level, and 6d on Portſand as propoſed by " you; A certain Proportion of the Tax ſhould be added to the " Fund for Repairs of the Banks — of that Fund, ſuch Part " as appertains to the 1ſt Diſtrict, ſhould be intirely in the Pow- " er of the Commiſſioners of the 1ſt Diſtrict to be applied by " them, upon the Works immediately connected therewith, ſo that " the Waters of Carr Dyke and the Folly, may be kept out of " Boro' Fen Common, which they never yet have been, and on " that Account the Engines of the 1ſt Diſtrict have been obliged " to be increaſed in ſize at an immenſe Expence.

" According to your Scheme 11,347l. 10s. 6d. will be applied " in 13 Years to the Repairs of the Banks, which is 873l. per " Year on an Average —— This I apprehend muſt be more than " can poſſibly be wanted, becauſe according to the printed Ac- " count you ſent me, There was no more than 944l. 17s. 4d. " per Annum, when the 4d. per Acre on the North Level and " 2d. on Portſand was laid in 1778, at which Time the North " Bank was in ſo much a worſe State than it now is, that I preſume " Half the Money would as effectually ſecure it from this " Period, as the whole has done from 1778, to this Time; It " appears to me therefore that the Debt of 25,000l. might be paid " in leſs Time than 13 Years and the Country be as effectually " ſecured as it now is.

" I find that Portſand's Share of the 5,000l. Debt, is about " one fifth or 1,000l. and if the North Level is charged to the " Taxes in duplex Proportion, it will pay 500l. of that 1,000l.— " upon a rough Calculation if 420l. per Annum, is allowed for " Repairs of Banks which I preſume and hope will be quite ſuf- " ficient, the whole Debt of 25,000l, will be paid in 10 Years " except only the 500l. abovemetioned, which ought to be paid " by Portſand, and for which ſome particular Proviſion ſeems " neceſſary to be made.

" When the Debt is diſcharged, the Fund that will remain for " Works only will be ſo large, that great Exertion may be uſed

" to make amends for the Effects of a more oeconomical Plan, whilſt " the Payment of the Debts is depending, and I muſt own that " from the preſent State of the Banks and Outfal, I am not at " all apprehenſive of any ill Conſequences.

" I hope you will have given theſe crude Hints ſome Con- " ſideration by Thurſday, when I ſhall be glad to know your " Sentiments of them.

I remain

Dear Sir,

your obedient

and obliged

Servant

GEO. MAXWELL.

AFTER the foregoing Correſpondence I do not recollect any particular Converſation we had on the Subject, until the General Meeting of the North Level Commiſſioners here, on the 7th of July laſt, when before proceeding to Buſineſs, Mr. Maxwell aſked me " If I intended to bring the Queſtion reſpecting " the new Tax forward on that Day, He had been informed that I " did, and had ſomething to offer thereon, which was reduced " into Writing, but he had not it with him;" or ſomething to that Effect, My Reply was, " Certainly not, and that I ſhould " not attempt ſo doing without firſt acquainting him" — After this Mr. Saunderſon of Spalding, mentioned with Approbation, the Idea of diſcharging the Debt; the Subject was very ſoon indeed entered into, and in Conſequence of what had before paſſed betwixt Mr. Maxwell and myſelf, that I might avoid ſo doing, I quitted the Room, on my Return, I found it, ſtill the Subject of

of Converſation, and relating to the Free Lands, when I ſaid, "they contain about 21,000 Acres, and I can Anſwer for "18,000 Acres" — this ended the Converſation — and was the only Part, I took therein ——

But neither in my own Mind, nor any Body's elſe, was a Tax then *determined* on, nor was any Step ever intended to be taken this Year — but now, I will venture to ſay ſo far —

That I firmly believe it will proceed another Year, notwithſtanding any Oppoſition that can be made to it —

And that I am thoroughly convinced no other Plan is practicable —

From the Year 1770 to the preſent Time there has been paid from His Grace's Eſtate in the 3d. Diſtrict only, the Sum of 20,735l. 3s. 0d. to the Commiſſioners Funds, beſides the Corporation Taxes — And there has been taken from thoſe Funds, for the Works which preſerve the ſaid 3d. Diſtrict, 1926l. 10s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ the remainder 18,808l. 12s. $10\frac{1}{2}$ has been appropriated towards the Works of the other Diſtricts, and to the Common Cauſe.

With reſpect to the Rent paid by His Grace for the Corporation Banks and Fiſheries, they, with all the others belonging to the Corporation, are on the Expiration of a Leaſe put up to Public Auction at Ely, of which Public Notice is given, and they were hired for His Grace at ſuch Public Auction by the beſt Bidder there.

I ſhall now take my Leave of the Subject, lamenting there ſhould ever have been a Neceſſity, for thus Publickly engaging in it, [redacted] induced ſo to do, from no other Motive, but Regard to his Grace's Intereſt, and the Preſervation of the Country; not out of Oppoſition to Mr. Maxwell; — Mr. Payne, or James Foreman may contend with him if they think proper, I ſhall not.

Thorney Abby,
Oct. 4th, 1788.

J. W I N G.

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